



COMMENTS OF

THE HONORABLE

RAUL G. SALINAS
MAYOR
CITY OF LAREDO, TEXAS

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM AND NONPROLIFERATION

COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 7, 2006
LAREDO, TEXAS

I. INTRODUCTION

Chairman Royce, Members of the Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation, my fellow state and local government colleagues, good morning and welcome to Laredo. I am Raul Salinas, the mayor of Laredo. While I know others have welcomed you to Laredo, let me officially welcome you to our city, the City of Laredo.

It is a great honor for me, as one of my first official duties, to welcome the United States Congress to Laredo. What the members of the Subcommittee may not know is that my first two jobs as an adult were to work in Washington as an aide to Representative Kika de la Garza and then later to become a member of the Capitol Hill Police Force. From the Capitol Police Department, I went on to a career as an FBI agent. You can only imagine then how much pride I take in welcoming you to my city today.

I am also excited and grateful that the Congress has taken the advice of local government officials all along the border, including my predecessor Mayor Betty Flores¹, who has counseled the Administration and the Congress that if you want to talk about border issues, it is best to do so with the officials on the border that live with the decisions you make and more importantly will be your allies in achieving the shared mission of border security. While the issue of border security is of national significance, for us on the border, a safe and operational border is our life. Last month, President Bush honored us with his presence here in Laredo, and today, we are honored by yours.

We congratulate you for not only hearing our pleas for border involvement, but for listening and coming to Laredo.

¹ Mayor Betty Flores also served as the Chair of the United States Conference of Mayors Borders Task Force. I would recommend the work of the Conference of Mayors to the Subcommittee on Border Issues. A copy of a border fence resolution adopted by the Conference of Mayors Committee, and set for consideration by the full conference, is attached hereto as Exhibit B.

Before beginning my testimony, I also want to introduce you to my Chief of Police – Agustin Dovalina, III. Chief Dovalina heads one of the largest police forces on the Texas – Mexico border. We are proud of our men and women in the Laredo Police Department. The challenges faced by our colleagues in Nuevo Laredo demonstrate the invaluable role a professional police force plays in ensuring the quality of life of a community. I have asked the Chief to join me here today to answer any questions you may have of us on police operations in the largest urban border crossing in the nation.

II. LOS DOS LAREDOS AND THE ROLE WE PLAY ON THE BORDER

As a newly elected mayor, you must excuse me for first bragging just a little about my community.

Laredo is at the center of the primary trade route connecting Canada, the United States, and Mexico. We are the gateway to Mexico's burgeoning industrial complex. Laredo and Nuevo Laredo, "Los Dos Laredos," offer markets, business opportunities, and profit potential which business and industry simply cannot find anywhere else.

Los Dos Laredos are actually one city divided only by the Rio Grande. Originally settled by the Spaniards in 1755, Laredo/Nuevo Laredo became the first "official" port of entry on the U.S./Mexico border in 1851. Now, the Laredo Customs District handles more trade than the ports of Southern California, Arizona, New Mexico and West Texas combined.

Laredo is the only U.S./Mexico border city strategically positioned at the convergence of all land transportation systems. Mexico's principal highway and railroad leading from Central America through Mexico City, Saltillo and Monterrey, the industrial heart of Mexico, converge at Laredo to meet two major U.S. rail lines, Interstate 35, and other roads which fan outwards to the urban centers and seaports of Texas and beyond to Northern States and Canadian Provinces, including Illinois, Michigan, New York, and Ontario.

For the last several years, Mexico's economic reforms, increased U.S./Mexico trade, and cross border production sharing have combined to spur Laredo's growth as never before. As the fastest growing city east of the Rocky Mountains, and the most competitive NAFTA crossing across the U.S., Laredo's economic future is vibrant.

We are happy that the Congress is seeking to address border security as part of the war on terrorism, but we also need to ensure that we do not undermine that vibrant future I just referenced.

Mr. Chairman, I am here to deliver a very simple, but important message. **We must make our borders safe, but not close them to trade and community.** While the nation must be dedicated to enhancing the security of our borders, that commitment must be made with a concurrent commitment to ensuring that our borders continue to operate efficiently in moving people and goods. In Laredo we think that can be summoned up in a simple statement. **We need to build bridges, not walls.**²

III. MAYOR SALINAS' LAW ENFORCEMENT HISTORY

They said that only President Nixon could have gone to China because his anti-communism credentials were beyond reproach. Mr. Chairman, while I am not seeking to compare myself to President Nixon, I do believe that I have the credentials and the credibility to talk about the need to preserve trade and community without undercutting a commitment to homeland security. Before being elected mayor, I committed thirty-five years of my life to public service. The great majority of these years were as a law enforcement officer; be that on Capital Hill as a policeman, as an FBI agent here on the border, or as a legal attaché in Mexico City. A summary of my career is attached hereto. I did want to mention that I am very proud of the fact that in 2003 President Bush recognized my efforts as an FBI agent.

² The Laredo City Council has formally adopted this position as reflected by the attached resolution.

With all my years of service to homeland security, I feel very confident that my credibility is sufficient to state that this nation can be safer without closing or slowing our borders. Let me give you but three simple ideas of how the Congress might enhance national security here in Laredo while promoting efficient borders.

a. River Bend Security Road Project

The City of Laredo in coordination with the United States Border Patrol is seeking a three million dollar grant to improve national security through the enhancement of mobility and access into secluded areas fronting the Rio Grande River within the corporate limits of the City of Laredo. Such a proposal is much cheaper than a fence and more productive. This project would enhance Border Patrol, local law enforcement, and local emergency response teams in the day-to-day policing and oversight of this international border area. The United States Border Patrol has existing funding appropriated for the construction of a narrow, all weather (unpaved) roadway adjacent to the Rio Grande River. We think that project should be expanded to better meet all needs and because of the local benefit, we are prepared to offer a local match to the federal funds.

b. Fund COPS and Provide Emphasis on Border

With the assistance of the U.S. Department of Justice COPS program, the Laredo Police Department has hired approximately 155 police officers to focus on community policing issues, which many times are in fact border security issues. The added personnel have enabled the Laredo Police Department (LPD) to implement the philosophy at a citywide level and establish the foundation of COPS. The COPS program has been under funded or subject to earmark only appropriation for the last number of years, and Laredo has not been a continuing beneficiary, despite our ongoing service to the nation.

c. UASI Criteria to Include Border Communities

The Department of Homeland Security has created the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) program with the stated goal of making grants available for law enforcement terrorism prevention efforts. The grants also seek to enhance fire department's response to terrorism and other major incidents. The criterion for funding used by the DHS, however, has failed to recognize what this Committee already knows—investments made in border communities may be the best investments the nation can make. Because of the current criteria, Laredo has never been a direct recipient of UASI funds. We would welcome this Committee's leadership in seeking to amend the funding formula of UASI programs.

d. Port Grants Must Be Available to Land Ports

Just yesterday, the Department of Homeland Security announced a new round of funding availability for port security. As I explained above, Laredo is the nation's largest inland port and in the top ten in terms of freight moved for all ports—land *or* sea. Still, Laredo does not qualify for this port funding because we are not a *seaport*. The Committee could provide great leadership in helping address this shortcoming. I am sure my colleagues in Detroit and Buffalo would concur with my pleas for assistance.

These are just a few of our ideas on how the Committee may provide leadership on the issue of border security while enhancing economic development.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to the discussion and I remind you all that Chief Dovalina is here to answer any specific questions that you may have.

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Mayor Salinas' Law Enforcement History

Security Consultant - 2002 to Present

Texas Private Investigator Laredo, Texas

Security Consultant in the United States and in the Republic of Mexico.

Conduct Criminal/Civil type Private Investigations. Also Certified Training Instructor, i.e., Anti-Kidnappings, Interviewing Techniques, Crisis Management, Crime Scene Matters and Public Relations.

Assistant Legal Attaché 1997 - 2002

Office of the Legal Attaché, U.S. Embassy, Mexico City

Violent Crime/Terrorism, Kidnapping and Background Investigations Coordinator for FBI Fugitive cases in Mexico, with investigative, liaison and training responsibilities throughout Mexico. Special emphasis on initiatives in the Mexican states of Guerrero, Hidalgo, Michoacan, and Morelos. Case Agent for at least 15 kidnappings throughout Mexico. All victims returned home safely.

Senior Resident Agent 1994 - 1997

FBI Laredo Resident Agency Laredo, Texas

Senior Manager with direct oversight responsibilities for 16 personnel, fiscal and personnel matters and a variety of Criminal and Background Investigations (BI) in the Laredo, Texas/Mexican Border area. Additional responsibilities included Community Outreach and Media Relations activities, as well as liaison with senior level U.S. and Mexican law enforcement counterparts.

Special Agent 1988 - 1994

FBI Laredo Resident Agency Laredo, Texas

Seasoned Field Investigator specializing in Fugitive, Kidnappings, BI, Violent Crime and Public Corruption Investigations. Additional responsibilities included the development and maintenance of liaison contacts with both U.S. and Mexican law enforcement counterparts.

Special Agent 1975 - 1988

FBI Washington Field Office Washington, D.C.

Field Investigator for National Security, BI, and Violent Crime Investigations, to include Terrorism Matters. Credited with the development of an FBI Hispanic Equal Employment Opportunity Program and creator and host of a weekly FBI Spanish language radio program broadcast by 177 radio stations in both the U.S. and Mexico. Foreign Counterintelligence assignments.

Police Officer 1970 - 1975

United States Capitol Police Washington, D.C.

Responsibilities included providing physical protection for members of the U.S. House of Representatives, U.S. Senate, President, Vice President and visiting foreign dignitaries. Special Event/Riot Control duties.

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Staff Assistant 1968 - 1970

Hon. Eligio (Kika) de la Garza, US. House of Reps. Washington, D.C.

Responsibilities included general constituent services casework as well as constituent correspondence matters. Additional responsibilities included representing Congressman de la Garza in meetings and hearings. Also credited with the development of a weekly bi-lingual radio program for the Congressman, as a means of further reaching out to his constituency.

Education/Specialized Skills 1970-1974

University of Maryland: BA, Degree College Park, Maryland

Elkins Institute of Broadcasters & Engineers: FCC Broadcaster's License Dallas, Texas

Skills: Hostage Negotiator; FBI Certified Police Training Instructor-Crisis Management & Kidnapping; Interviewing & Interrogation; Media; Public Speaking; U.S.-Mexico Relations; Fluency in Spanish Language; Excellent liaison contacts in Mexico; Military Police and Foreign and Domestic Terrorism experience. Licensed Texas Private Investigator and International Security Consultant and Instructor. Certified in Homeland Security-American College of Forensic Examiners Institute.